

“See it from the end!” (Luke 12:32-40)

“Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

“Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes.

Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them. If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them awake, blessed are those servants! But know this, that if the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into. You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

We may be looking at our lives in the wrong way. That's right. And as Jesus speaks to us, He gives us directions that we may want to consider and consider them seriously.

Last Sunday we meditated upon the parable of the Rich Fool, and today's Gospel reading is still a part of how Jesus responded when the man in the crowd had asked him to tell his brother to divide their inheritance.

As Jesus responds to that question, He contrasts two ways in how we can orient our lives. One is foolish and one is wise. One was vividly represented by the Rich Fool. These were some of the descriptions of how he had oriented his life.

He was focused on himself. He was focused on this life. On his security. On his well-being. That's where his thoughts and time and energy and efforts went. In other words, he was anxious about what to eat and what to drink and what to put on. He was fearful that he may lack, that he may run out of essentials. Ultimately that was his fear of death as the last stop when you run out of everything.

He believed that ultimately his life, his daily bread and wellbeing depended upon him, upon his efforts, upon how much he could gather and store. Then he will be safe, then he will live happily ever after. Does this way of orienting our lives sound familiar?

It surely does. This is how so many orient and live their lives. As Jesus said: “**For all the nations of the world seek after these things...**”. You may also remember how God in that parable of the Rich Fool describe this way of orienting one's life:

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“Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?” So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.” Fool... Fine, fine, but then what would a wise alternative be?

How else can we orient our lives?

How else can we look at them, except from here and now of our existence?

There are a few things that are unquestionably certain in our lives. Unavoidably certain. One of them is – we all will die. No exceptions. Regardless of who you are, regardless of how much you have, how big are your barns or how empty your closet, the day comes, when our very souls will be required from us.

When we will stand before our Creator and each human being will have to give an account for our lives. Remember Jesus' exhortation from last Sunday: **“Seek God’s kingdom, and these things [that you need] will be added to you.”**

In other words, focus on God’s Kingdom, orient your life on God’s Kingdom and whatever else you need for this life, it will be added to you. He goes on: **“Sell your possessions and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail [...] For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”**

Or we can say that Jesus directs us to orient our lives on the age to come, to look at our life from their very end, from the day when we will cross over either to be with the Triune God forever, or to forever be separated from him in outer darkness.

Jesus directs us to look at our life, at our priorities and our decisions that we make today from the perspective of eternity. Let the eternal perspective shape what we value, what we strive for and how we live and act today. Instead of focusing on gaining more in this life, let us gather treasures for the life to come.

How would we do that? Instead of ever worrying about what to eat and drink and put on, Jesus invites us to focus on how the good Lord can use us and everything He has given us to bless others. Imagine that every day we would ask ourselves:

“How shall I live, what shall I do, how shall I behave, relate, act, so that my life would be pleasing to my Father in heaven, how to make Him proud?” Very practically, how do I live more faithfully according to God’s commandments, how do I live more faithfully according to His instructions for all our vocations?

You may be able to recall the feeling when you as children did something good and were waiting for your parents to find out about it. So that we could see them delighted and overjoyed and proud, and to hear their loving voices thanking and praising you for the work well done. Parents would love us just as we are, but how delighted they are when we listen to them and strive to lead a life that pleases and honors them.

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What if we lived our entire lives in the same way, looking forward to the day when we will see our Father in Heaven. Yes, He loves us as we are, because we are His adopted children, but how delighted, overjoyed and proud He will be when we listen to Him and strive to lead a life that pleases and honors Him! Eagerly expecting to hear His commendation to each one of us!

“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” Blessed we are that we don’t have to be like rich fools, for the Triune God gives us such a radically different life. You are not on your own. You are not alone. You are children of your Heavenly Father. He is your true and loving Father. He knows what you need.

He values you and cares for you more than you know. You are in His hands. There is no reason to be anxious or fearful. Ultimately, your life and wellbeing do not depend on your running and success, or failure. It depends on your Heavenly Father. We are made free to follow Jesus' instructions. You are valued, loved, safe and free.

This may sound nice, indeed, but we still struggle to stop fearing, stop being anxious, and to reorient our lives towards the Kingdom of God. Jesus knows that. This is why He keeps speaking to us and you need to hear what He says.

He tells us another parable. **“Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks.**

Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them. If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them awake, blessed are those servants!” This one is quite shocking.

Jesus is speaking about His disciples. He is speaking about us and to us. Be ready like men waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast. There was an interesting comment on this.

Some ancient translations instead of “waiting” use “expecting”. What’s the difference? “Waiting” is much more passive. E.g., waiting for the bus to come. “Expecting” is full of excitement and anticipation. You can’t wait for that to happen! You can’t wait to see your Master and to hear His commendation! That’s what our attitude should be.

That master was returning from the wedding feast. It seems that he had left early, to get home sooner. He didn’t raise voice asking to be let in, he quietly knocked, knowing that his faithful servants were expecting his return.

And that’s where the unexpected happens. **“Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them.”** When Jesus says “truly”, He really wants us to pay attention to what follows.

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In the Ancient Near East there were different social classes. Beginning with master, then his family, then stewards, then full time servants, then hired servants, and then finally... slaves. In this parable Jesus speaks about the master and about his slaves. That is, the very top and the very bottom.

The master returns, and what does he do? He dresses himself and asks his slaves – slaves! – to recline at the table, where usually he and his family would sit, to take the places of honour, and he comes, and he himself serves them.

That would be quite a shocking moment in every culture, even here and today; if the owner of a mansion returns from a wedding feast early, changes and seats his service personnel at his family table and serves them. How much more in Jesus' time! To experience such humbling, self-denying and serving attitude changes people.

Do you know why Jesus tells this to you? Can you guess? For this is exactly what Jesus does for you. He, the Son of God, humbles Himself, He comes to us as one of us. He not only serves us, but He also gives His life for us. Yes, also for you.

He did it back then, and He does it now. It is the Risen Lord Jesus who comes to us and who serves us His Holy Meal. He gives Himself to us, the very body that was sacrificed on the cross and the very blood that was spilled for the forgiveness of our sins.

He gives it to you. He gives us the very body that was raised and now sits at the right hand of the Father, and the very blood that has true life, eternal life in it. This is what He Himself serves us. Our Master, who comes to serve us, His unworthy servants.

We may be insignificant in the eyes of this world, but we are served by the Lord of lords and the King of kings. He Himself comforts you: **"Fear not, little flock!"** He Himself assures you of your future: **"It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."** Blessed you are if you listen to Jesus speaking to you.

Blessed you are if you joyfully and eagerly expect your Master to come, if that is how you orient your life. Desiring to be faithful. Desiring to please and honour Him. Desiring to gather and store treasures not in our barns here, but in heaven.

That is how Jesus directs us to see and orient our lives wisely. And He gives us reason and motivation to do that. For He is our gracious and generous Master, who has made you co-heirs with Him of the Father's Kingdom. It is yours.

May He help us to expect Him eagerly. Every day.

And when He comes, may He find us awake!

Amen.